

# The Freethinker

Volume LXXXIII—No. 37

Founded 1881 by G. W. Foote

Price Sixpence

THE RECENT Pan-Anglican Congress held in Toronto, has again drawn attention to the anomalous position occupied by the cosmopolitan Anglican Church, surely a self-evident contradiction in terms! A number of episcopal statements made at this conference, seem to demonstrate that at least the more intelligent Anglican Church leaders nowadays realise that things have changed and that we are no longer living in the leisurely days (for the upper classes for whom then Anglicanism almost exclusively existed) of those pious defenders and adherents of the Church of England, Queen Victoria and Queen Anne ("the Church of England's glory", as that notable, if somewhat unstable, pillar of the Establishment, the Vicar of Bray, described our last Stuart Queen). For example, the Bishop of Southwark, Dr. Mervyn Stockwood has pretty obviously recognised that Anthony Trollope and *Barchester Towers*, are a long way off from the needs of a modern industrial community. What accordingly are the prospects of the Church of England by Law Established, in a world and social order so far and so obviously removed from "good King Charles's golden days", when the Church of England was in its heyday.

## Anglicanism—and England

I must confess, to begin with, that my following paragraphs are concerned mainly with the metropolitan Church of England in England. As far as my limited knowledge goes, Anglicanism in Scotland is the very un-Scottish creed of an alien and snobbish minority. The American Episcopal Church is similarly the creed of a snobbish minority, whilst it is quite clear, even from episcopal outbursts at the Toronto Congress, that as far as India and other of England's former colonial possessions are concerned, the past statutes of the Anglican Churches still speak of their long past association with foreign colonial rule and English imperialistic exploitation. It is perhaps revealing that some extremely forthright statements on this theme were made at the Toronto Congress by Dr. William Simon, the Bishop of Llandaff, who comes from the oldest of all English colonial possessions, Wales, into which the ancient English first drove and then followed and conquered, the original inhabitants of England, the Britons, whom (to add insult to injury), they then dubbed "Welsh" (i.e. foreigners), in their own native terrain.

The English Church in Wales is now also an obviously foreign minority Church which thanks chiefly to Lloyd George, has now lost after a bitter struggle, its former position as state-endowed. A generally similar position also exists in Ireland where the Church of Ireland has always been, and in the days of the Dublin Castle regime, very obviously was, the imported Church of the English Garrison. In my submission, it is quite impossible to understand either the past or present position of the Church of England anywhere unless one realises that first, foremost, and all the time, it is an *English Church*, the product of the English Establishment. For the

English Church has never had any deep roots in the English masses, a fatal defect in a democratic age. The Church of England may still not know whether it is Protestant or Catholic, but at least it has always known that it is English!

## The Church of England and the Establishment

It is in fact today, just this that threatens the English Church with imminent decline and eventual dissolution.

For the old aristocratic—or more accurately oligarchic—English Establishment and social order are ever more obviously on the way out. This process again was effectively begun by Gladstone, and has been most effectively continued by the

recent appalling moral scandals associated with the very heart of the Establishment. The present social hierarchy is in full and obvious decay. But again, historically the Church of England is the creation of this social hierarchy; it grew up within a relationship analogous to that of Siamese twins. It was in no way an accident that the Anglican hymn book until very recently publicly proclaimed "the rich man in his castle, the poor man at his gate, God made them high and lowly and ordered their estate"; thus placing the social order that emerged from the Industrial Revolution under the express protection of Almighty God, the Anglican version.

## Has the Church of England got any Future?

Today such a social hierarchy has become impossible, and the prospects of what one might aptly term its spiritual shadow, have become correspondingly dimmed. It would accordingly be perhaps more accurate to ask: has Anglicanism *any* future rather than to ask the more obvious one, what is the future of Anglicanism? From recent remarks made by the more percipient Anglican leaders, it seems clear enough that they recognise this fact also. Unless Anglicanism can find some alternative social basis to the now fast disintegrating old oligarchical order, its prospects of survival appear to be slim in the age of industrial democracy that is now clearly dawning; an era in which the fox-hunting squires who used to be the pillars of the Church of England are now becoming as scarce as the foxes they used to hunt to the incongruous music of church bells.

## Decline and Disintegration

A century ago, the Reverend Charles Kingsley, a much more intelligent Christian Socialist as well as a much better writer than the present ones, sought to acclimatise the Church to the then newly industrialised masses, but he got little support from "the Tory Party at prayer" as the Church of England was then accurately designated. Now, despite frantic contemporary efforts to talk in a language intelligible to people unaccustomed to the episcopal accent of (exclusively, so far) Oxford and Cambridge, it would appear to be too late. As matters stand at present, the decline and eventual disintegration of Anglicanism (i.e. in England), would appear to be certain. The at present dominant High Church section may be reconciled

## VIEWS AND OPINIONS

### Has Anglicanism a Future?

By F. A. RIDLEY

to Rome, perhaps with the canonical status of a Uniate Church—such as already exists in certain Levantine lands—with its own liturgy (in English), a married clergy and perhaps an English episcopate headed, as at present, by Canterbury. If so, it would certainly not be a unanimous secession. The Evangelicals would probably amalgamate with the Methodists (as they are already trying to do from within the still-existing Established Church), while the small but lively modernist groups would probably join

forces with the Unitarians or in some cases perhaps even with the Humanist movement, though hardly with the Secularist side of it. Such a break up will very probably transpire within this present century: it even appears quite possible that the Church effectively founded by Elizabeth I may, if the present queen lives as long as her great predecessor (70) end with Elizabeth II. At least here are many contemporary signs that appear to point unmistakably in that direction.

## Religion and Nuclear War

By G. L. SIMONS

THE PURPOSE of this article is to argue that the more religious a nation is the more likely it will be to revert to nuclear war as a deliberate act of policy. I am not concerned with historical examples of where religion and war have been associated; these are too numerous to need mention. Instead, I will argue in general terms that the sort of mentality which favours total war in the modern world is nurtured and sustained by the religious outlook.

Today, total war would be so horrific that, sensibly viewed, it would be rejected as an acceptable possibility by all intelligent people. If, therefore, the ruling classes in both East and West wish to preserve the insane antagonism in their populations which makes the prospect of war not merely tolerable but preferable to capitulation, they must adopt artificial measures to ensure that war is not viewed sensibly. This they do by political indoctrination. This consists of distorting the nature of the opposing side for purposes of internal consumption. Thus, in America, nothing could possibly be worse than being a Communist; in the Soviet Union nothing could be worse than being a Capitalist. In both East and West "Communism" and "Capitalism" are emotionally loaded terms. They both generate unthinking partisan feeling; little or no attempt is made to understand the possible merits in the alternative system.

The essence of extreme indoctrination is falsification. It may actually disseminate untrue propositions; this is a crude but familiar technique. More frequently, however, the falsification is more subtle and consists in reporting only the bad about the opposite side, or in taking statements out of context, or in broadcasting only partial information about particular events. There was a clear example of this sort of thing in the BBC reporting of the last Soviet General Elections. After giving some brief preliminary information the announcer said, "Of course, only one name appears on the ballot sheet". This would leave the unreflective viewer with the impression that the Soviet Government could not possibly be democratically elected. How the one name reached the ballot sheet (it is not always one name incidentally), how there exist democratic safeguards at the time of polling was never mentioned by the BBC announcer. This is subtle, dishonest indoctrination and it is happening all the time. Similarly, some time ago, the *Guardian* ran an editorial in which it criticised both the Russians and the Americans for failing to reach a test-ban agreement. The part of the editorial which criticised the Americans was reprinted in *Izvestia*; no mention was made of the part which criticised the Russians. This again is indoctrination.

Indoctrination of this type aims at the surrender of rational thought; it cannot achieve its purpose if people demand evidence, and that the opposite side be given a hearing. Indoctrination aims at creating an emotional frame of mind which is capable of strong, hostile feeling but not of cautious, rational thought. In short, indoc-

trination aims at replacing reasonable judgement by prejudice. And so, if a state of mind is created in the populace which is receptive to propaganda, which is not concerned about facts or rational thought, then indoctrination can achieve its greatest effect. There are two powerful forces in the modern world which encourage the creation of this state of mind—one is nationalism, the other is religion. (This essay is concerned with religion. I am not arguing that religion is the most powerful force for nuclear war, only that it makes nuclear war more likely.) Religion encourages the believing of unsound statements which have support in emotion; religion discourages rational thought and careful reflection; it discourages the consideration of evidence and the use of logic. Thus religion helps to create the state of mind in so many people which is so useful to those who wish to indoctrinate the population. Without religion, thought would become more secular, and hence more empirical. Evidence would count as it should, and the potential indoctrinators would have an infinitely harder task.

Thus since indoctrination increases the possibility of war, and since religion increases the efficacy of indoctrination, it may truly be said that religion makes war more likely. This conclusion would only be false if there were forces within the Church that acted more powerfully in the opposite direction. I detect no such forces. Pope John's last encyclical is a step in the right direction, but its impact is negligible in comparison with the capacity of religion to close minds to reasonable thought.

For the effect of religious teaching is to encourage emotionally sustained beliefs, the ignoring of evidence, and the unshakable conviction that one is necessarily right (since God says so). These sort of perverse notions encourage the closed mind, the prejudiced mind, and the mind which is receptive to the emotional appeal. This is exactly the sort of mentality that the indoctrinator requires. When rational judgment is suspended and the only criterion of truth is the capacity of a notion to effect one's emotions then people are completely gullible and can be easily influenced by all the distortions and half-truths put to them through the press and broadcasting and from the pulpit.

The conclusion seems sound. Indoctrination is the only means in the modern world of convincing populations that nuclear war would be preferable to capitulation. A religious atmosphere, by discouraging objectivity and encouraging emotionalism, facilitates the task of the indoctrinator. Therefore religion, by increasing the efficacy of indoctrination, makes the possibility of war greater than it would be in a secular world.

The arguments against religion are powerful and numerous. If its tendency to promote nuclear war were the only objection to it this would be a sufficient reason for combating it with energy and determination.

# The Old Old Story

By REGINALD UNDERWOOD

WHETHER OR NOT the person we know as Jesus belongs entirely to fact or fiction, or whether he belongs in some degree to both, is likely to be for ever in dispute. But there can hardly be much disputing about his intense reality in the sense that the Prince of Denmark, Mr. Pickwick and Sherlock Holmes are real. These fictitious personalities are probably more familiarly known to more people than hosts of actual persons with whom daily contact is made. And Jesus, almost certainly more fictional than factual is easily the most outstanding. The old old story of Jesus and his love has been so insistently drummed into us from first to second childhood, that between a god and an expletive his name has become one of the commonest parts of English speech. It has, in fact, become next to impossible to get it out of our system.

Long ago, in answer to an ingenuous question, a now forgotten Sunday School teacher came forth with the remembered explanation of the name Jesus Christ, that Jesus was the baptismal name and Christ the surname. This was at least adaptive if not strictly correct, and it rather suggests that there may have been a time when the more polite would address Jesus as Mr. Christ, or among his family circle he may have been affectionately called "our Jesus". Nothing so plebeian however for clerical snobbery. At some remote though unspecified date, Jesus, in order that he should not be outshone by succeeding but more worldly emulators, apparently had a posthumous peerage conferred upon him. Since then, he has always been known with unctuous propriety as the Lord Jesus Christ. Considering his very manifest contempt for the puerilities of class distinction, what he would have thought of so classy an honour is not difficult to guess. Perhaps like one of his present-day eminent admirers, he would have abdicated from a lord to a commoner and have gained in respect what he lost in humbug.

For although there was at times a touch of the aristocrat and more than a touch of the autocrat about Jesus, he never evinced anything but disdain for the social esteem, the parade of superiority and the lust for power that distinguishes so many priests and prelates, while they brazenly pretend to take this lowly of heart as their model. It is impossible to imagine Jesus dolled up in lace and lawn and gew-gaws, with a sort of dunce's cap upon his head and surrounded by the tawdry paraphernalia of ecclesiastical pomp. It is impossible not to imagine how he would have shunned, or better still, how he would have rebuked such hypocritical showing-off. At the same time, his biographers make it plain that in other ways he thought no small beer of himself. To such an extent indeed, that there came a time when falling for the outrageous flattery of Peter, he seems to have gone fairly off his head and developed ideas about himself that no sane lord, not even a Lord Archbishop, would have had the impudence to entertain. Jesus may never have declared outright that he was God Almighty, but both by word and deed, he provided such ample suggestion to that effect that multitudes of his more simple and credulous contemporaries came to accept him in that light.

According to the sensational romance known as the Acts of the Apostles, Jesus, after his second withdrawal from earthly life, was revered more than ever as a divine being by those sufficiently taken up with him to be sufficiently taken in by him. His better educated ad-

versaries however continued to deny him any honourable human status let alone divine. Yet all but one or two of the subsequent religions which have claimed him as their founder, have uncompromisingly asserted that he is in indeed very God. And it is in the name of Jesus as God of Love that they have always waged their interminable and hate-ridden squabbles. Many of them have not hesitated to denounce all those who have disputed this divinity, as scamps and blackguards of the deepest dye, fit for nothing but slow faggots on earth with eternal fire and brimstone to follow.

And this barbarous condemnation gains considerable support from Jesus himself. For when we come to make, as few professing Christians appear to make, a really close and critical scrutiny of Jesus as he is portrayed in the only known record of him, that fabulous collection of scenes and anecdotes called the New Testament, we find precious little evidence of the "gentle Jesus meek and mild" of familiar tradition. Here is no portrait of a man who can be looked upon, even by the best disposed, as the unblemished pattern of human perfection. Intellectually and artistically he appears as infinitely inferior to Socrates, Leonardo, Bach and Einstein, to name but a fraction. He can often be intolerantly self-righteous, with no patience for differences of opinion, scathingly denouncing as an evil and adulterous generation those who dare to disagree with him and ask, very justly, for a sign of his credentials. He consigns to perdition all those unable to accept unquestioningly everything he tells them and reserves his magnanimity for those who fawningly put him in a good conceit with himself in order to gain his favours.

It is not easy to work up much enthusiasm for the unique wisdom Jesus is supposed to have exemplified, a wisdom not counted by everybody as wholly wise and which is mostly second-hand even when it is not second-rate. In that higgledy-piggledy list of sayings strung together as the Sermon on the Mount, there is virtually nothing of value that others had not said before him. Moreover, although we are bidden to do this and to do that, we are not instructed as to how we are to come by the capacity to do it. Very few human beings are constitutionally capable of living up to some of the precepts Jesus so glibly enunciates. These may be godly, but it cannot be a very god-like comprehension that is unaware of their human impracticability, human nature being what it is.

Jesus himself by no means always lives up to his own teaching. As Dr. Montefiore has observed, if we could come across one single incident in which Jesus actually performed a loving deed to one of his Rabbinic antagonists, that would have been worth all the injunctions to love our enemies put together. He harshly rebuffs his mother and astonishingly demands that all those who want to be his followers shall hate their wives, mothers, fathers and children. Needless to say, there have been endless attempts to explain away this and similar sayings. But such attempts have the unconvincing ring of casuistical excuses. No wonder a pious old lady duteously declared that although of course she loved Jesus, she could never like him.

Jesus largely taught by parables, apparently on the extraordinary assumption that they would more effectively convey his meaning than straightforward speaking.

(Concluded on next page)

## This Believing World

**Religion or no religion, "our Lord" or not,** lots of people hate having their pint of beer stopped by a priest. This is what happened to the members of a club run in a room below the Sacred Heart Church at Hemsworth, Yorkshire, though the club had been properly licensed for 66 years. The priest in charge, Father Felix Stanton (*Sunday Express*, August 25th), wants the beer-drinking to stop, or he will close the club; and its 210 men and women members are up in arms about it. They are "astounded and incensed". But as Father Stanton has the full weight of his Church surely his word is law? What about a spot of prayer to ask God himself to intervene? Or is beer one of those things even a Deity is powerless about?

★

**The same journal tells us a little more** about Black Magic, for an altar stone of the first century has been stolen from Lanercost Priory in Cumberland which was originally dedicated to Cocidio, the God of the 20th Roman Legion, and found near Hadrian's Wall. With such a history, can anyone doubt that the devotees of Black Magic stole it for their blasphemous services, with Cocidio as their Deity rather than Jesus? During the Middle Ages, anyone found stealing anything from an altar was immediately struck by lightning and is still burning in Hell as any Roman priest would tell you. Why does this not happen now?

★

**As a perfect example of true Christianity** consider how the parson who married the Duke of Windsor to Mrs. Simpson, the Rev. Robert Jardine was, according to the story written by James Leasor, treated by his fellow parsons. He was, says the *Sunday Express*, in a flaring headline "spurned and shunned". When he left his parish, he did not receive even one handshake. And years later, his name was even forgotten by the Duke! But in spite of all this, Mr. Jardine never lost his faith in Christianity.

★

**Canon Pearce-Higgins has reacted** very strongly against the attacks made on him for his "heretical" remarks concerning the Bible. In a letter to the *Daily Mail* (August 30th) he was "horrified" that anybody should attack him for something he said about the Holy Bible "known to scholars for 50 years", and he felt that "we must honestly admit such human error". If the worthy Canon had said 150 years, he would have been nearer to the truth, for he said nothing which was not said by Thomas Paine.

★

**But because the truth about the Bible** has been known so long by Christian scholars, does not mean that his parish flock know it, or indeed know any genuine criticism of the Bible. Among the true Christians in a parish one in a thousand may have *heard* of, say, the *Age of Reason*, but in all probability has never read it. Has Canon Pearce-Higgins? Could he answer Paine?

★

**As a matter of fact, he now proudly asserts** that most of his paper was *defending* miracles, angels, and even the Resurrection; against those who consider that these are all "myths". He was "not out to destroy the Bible, or people's faith but to confirm it against many of the more negative critics". Is there not more joy in the Church for one honest Canon safely back in the Faith than in a hundred negative critics?

## THE OLD OLD STORY

(Concluded from page 291)

The old-fashioned definition of a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning. The meanings of some of these parables may be heavenly, but that does not prevent them from being so cryptic, so deplorably equivocal, that ever since, men have been able to find in them, vindication for anything and everything they have wanted to do. It can also be complained that on many matters that really did matter and on which the opinions of Jesus could have been profoundly interesting, he expressed no opinion at all. And when at last he was taken up into heaven on a cloud, he left his gaping onlookers with a tremendous promise never fulfilled, thereby indicating that he was at least as deluded as they were.

It is a commonplace that even a bad man has some good points. Judged by average standards Jesus could no doubt be regarded as a good man with some bad points. Let those anxious to establish the more admirable side of him, search the Scriptures on their own account. They will not go unrewarded. But if they are honest they will discover and admit that the sanctimonious picture of Jesus the paragon, painted by popular theology, is a great deal more sentimental than impartial and gives an altogether false impression. Unlike the old lady, although taking him on the whole we might manage to like Jesus moderately well, we could scarcely manage to love him, certainly not with the devotional fervour required by religion. Wherever this is exhibited it can be pretty certain that it is neurotic, sham and unhealthy.

It is some consolation to reflect that after all Jesus is chiefly a myth, no more known out of the pseudo-historical New Testament than Mrs. Gamp is out of *Martin Chuzzlewit* or Alice out of *Wonderland*. And that is probably why his way of life has never really made any practical impact on more than a tiny percentage of the human race.

## CINEMA

### Heavens Above

I should like to commend the film, *Heavens Above*, as an absolute "must" for all secularists and freethinkers. The Boulting Brothers have used the cinema and comedy to drive home the true lessons of the secularist attack upon the Church. The ethics of Jesus taken in their literal form are shown to be at cross-purposes with the whole economic foundation of contemporary society and the bishop in the film (like his real brethren in the world of fact) will regard anybody as mad who seeks to follow them out. A bishop distinguished by a mixture of unctiousness and craftiness is backed up by an archdeacon who weds a belief in the traditional economic order to mere social sycophancy. Few who have known the higher clergy will fail to recognise the types or will deny their widespread existence. There are many vignettes of the layman who uses organised religion as a sort of masonic ritual conveying to him a sense of power and respectability. He is a really nasty type yet is common to church and chapel alike.

The film has drawn wide audiences and many must have been thinking of the serious reality behind the slapdash elements of comedy which caused them to laugh. It is a film of which the secularist and freethought movement should make much for there must be many in the audience who will ask questions about disestablishment and disendowment. Not a point is lost. The Boulting Brothers have shown the anxiety of the Church to utilise modern science. But it not only appears as adopting the space-ship in order to make a virtue of necessity. The bishop is also willing to make use of the sheer quackery of some psychiatry in order to show the insanity of the literal follower of Jesus. Nor, in one shot, are the hard-faced businessmen of the Church Commissioners forgotten. The film has certainly paved the way for a determined freethought follow-up.

F.H.A.M.

# THE FREETHINKER

103 BOROUGH HIGH STREET, LONDON, S.E.1  
TELEPHONE: HOP 2717

THE FREETHINKER can be obtained through any newsagent or will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates: One year, £1 17s. 6d.; half-year, 19s.; three months, 9s. 6d. In U.S.A. and Canada: One year, \$5.25; half-year, \$2.75; three months, \$1.40. Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 103 Borough High Street, London, S.E.1. Details of membership of the National Secular Society may be obtained from the General Secretary, 103 Borough High Street, S.E.1. Inquiries regarding Bequests and Secular Funeral Services should also be made to the General Secretary, N.S.S.

## Lecture Notices, Etc.

### OUTDOOR

Edinburgh Branch NSS (The Mound).—Sunday afternoon and evening: Messrs. CRONAN, McRAE and MURRAY.  
London Branches—Kingston, Marble Arch, North London: (Marble Arch), Sundays, from 4 p.m.: Messrs. L. EBURY, J. W. BARKER, C. E. WOOD, D. H. TRIBE, J. A. MILLAR.  
(Tower Hill). Every Thursday, 12—2 p.m.: Messrs. J. W. BARKER and L. EBURY.  
Manchester Branch NSS (Platt Fields), Sunday afternoon (Car Park, Victoria Street), Sunday evenings.  
Merseyside Branch NSS (Pierhead).—Meetings: Wednesdays, 1 p.m.; Sundays, 7.30 p.m.  
North London Branch NSS (White Stone Pond, Hampstead).—Every Sunday, noon: L. EBURY  
Nottingham Branch NSS (Old Market Square), every Friday, 1 p.m.: T. M. MOSLEY.

## Notes and News

ON AUGUST 30TH, Colin McCall considered Canon Max Warren's speech at the first plenary session of the Anglican Congress in Toronto. This week, in Views and Opinions, F. A. Ridley looks at the wider implications of the Congress and asks, "Has Anglicanism a Future?" We also print a letter from a former pillar(?) of the Establishment, F. H. Amphlett Micklewright, one time Church of England clergyman.

AS EXPECTED, Roman Catholics have been busy behind the scenes (no pun intended) in connection with the London production of Rolf Hochhuth's, *The Vicar or The Representative*, due to open at the Aldwych Theatre on September 25th. Sister Louis-Gabriel, a nun of the Daughters of Sion and a representative of the Council of Christians and Jews, was reported in the *Universe* (30/8/63) as having "gone along for informal talks with the play's producer before rehearsals began". "Earlier," we are told, "Lord Perth, a vice-president of the Council, had approached Sir Fordham Flower, chairman of the Royal [Shakespeare] Theatre Company, which is putting on the play".

SISTER Louis-Gabriel, who is German-born, considers that Hochhuth shows a "fanatical animosity" towards Pope Pius XII, so that the character becomes a caricature. "She has hopes, however, that some of the references offensive to Catholics may be omitted in the English version" of *The Representative*, as it will be entitled in the Aldwych production. And at a meeting with the producer, Mr. Clifford Williams and the Theatre Company's general manager, Mr. John Roberts, she was—according to the *Universe*—"given to understand . . . that the English version (much shorter than the German original) would present the character of the Pope more fairly".

WE WONDER exactly what this means. Of course the play has had to be cut, as it was for the German production

## The Freethinker Sustentation Fund

Previously acknowledged, £146 1s. 11d. J. B., 2s. 6d.; J. A., £3 2s. 6d.; R. Gilliland, 6s.; J. Soater, 2s. 6d.; S. J. Young, £1 10s.; E. Drabble, 7s. 6d.; A. Bedane, £1; Anon, £1 19s.; E. Cybart, 12s.; T. Walmsley, 10s.; O.A.P., 10s.; S. Merrifield, 3s.; C. Cullen, 7s.; J. Little, £1. Total to date, September 6th, 1963, £157 13s. 11d.

(the full version would run for seven or eight hours), but there should surely be no interference with the author's conception of the title-part, caricature or no caricature. Hochhuth is the playwright, and if his "Representative" is offensive to Catholics they can stay away. Sister Louis-Gabriel is altogether too concerned about "unbalanced prejudices" that "obscure what appears to be the theme of the play". Especially when she expresses that theme in the innocuous abstract form of: "The responsibility of the Christian for what happens in the world: to what extent are we our brother's keeper?" The play deals with the concrete question: why didn't Pius raise a finger to prevent Hitler's mass murder of the Jews?

LEST THERE should be any misunderstanding about Sister Louis-Gabriel's approach to the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company, however, the Rev. William B. Simpson, General Secretary of the Council of Christians and Jews, made everything clear in a letter to the *Sunday Times* (1/9/63). "What she agreed to do, if invited," he said, "was to advise the producer on such purely external matters as proper forms of title and address". What Mr. Simpson neglected to do was to say whether she was also one of the unnamed "two representatives of the Council" who met the manager and producer "informally". We can only hope that, in the face of these approaches, representations or offers of advice, the Royal Shakespeare Theatre Company will preserve its artistic integrity intact. From past experience we think it will.

"ON THE lighter side"—as a TV-advert has it—there has been the controversy over "The Angel" inn-sign at Braintree, Essex, with the halo over the tankard of beer instead of over the angel's head. This, said an outraged C. H. Collings of Bedford, "exalted" the tankard "to the spiritual level of the Holy Family, the saints and the apostles" (*Daily Telegraph*, 21/8/63). But Mrs. Jennie Sefton of Hampshire had some advice for the menfolk who "never had greater need for that [Middle Ages] kind of robust religion than they have today". They needed, she said, a religion where angels too can laugh".

CANON F. THOMSON, Rector of Blair's College, Aberdeen, said at a mass for Roman Catholic members of the British Association at St. Mary's RC Cathedral on September 1st, that there was "a need for religion to provide a proper balance for science" (*The Guardian*, 2/9/63). Scientific and Christian methods, with their respective emphasis on experiment and faith, were so very different, "sometimes apparently divergent". Yet they should not be thought of as "antagonistic, but rather as mutually complementary". Canon Thomson was speaking about today, of course. It was rather different in the past, when the Christian religion had the "whole truth".

ON August 25th (in *The Trinity Light*), St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School, Deptford, emphasised that it takes "a serious view" of Catholic parents "who do not practise their religion and who do not see that their children do either". A week later it declared its distress "to find children struggling to live their faith and getting little or no example from their parents".

# Christianity Still the Greatest

By H. CUTNER

I MUST CONFESS to a sneaking wish to read a new religious book when I see it, and the latest I have come across is *What World Religions Teach* by E. G. Parrinder, DD (G. C. Harrap and Co. Ltd.). As its date is 1963 I was intrigued to find out what the author had to say about Christianity. What he says about religions like Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, and their offshoots, certainly gives the average reader a good view, and there is an excellent bibliography so that one can go to more detailed sources if needed. Altogether it must be admitted that Dr. Parrinder has fulfilled his desire to give his readers "a short survey of the religions of the modern world and their teachings".

Students of comparative religions, often came to the conclusion that all supernatural religions, whatever they were called, were quite untrue. What they taught as ethics were often much the same, allowing for different geographical environment, and it was almost always the same kind of God, be it Yahveh, El, Jesus, Shiva, Brahma, Allah, or what you will. There was a God in Heaven or some similar place, and he always rewarded the faithful—that is, those who worshipped him. Those who did not were given Hell.

Dr. Parrinder looks upon Gautama as "one of the world's greatest teachers", and says "there is little serious doubt that he was a historical person". Personally, I think all these Gods or Buddhas are myths, and in any case we know very little if anything at all of any of them. The stories woven around them have certainly helped to keep their memory green, especially as, in the course of ages, they have had more and more pious additions. The invention of printing made "interpolations" almost impossible, but helped enormously to perpetuate a lot of sheer twaddle as truth.

The one thing which has always amused me about Buddhism is the insistence that because a Buddhist sits cross-legged under a Bo-tree and "meditates", as we are told Gautama did, he can attain "supreme wisdom". I am fairly certain that for Dr. Parrinder, this is really so. In fact, he insists that "the Buddhist analysis of the state of man is profound, and the way set out to cure his disease is truly noble". Well, begging instead of working is one of the ways which a Buddhist priest relies on to give him his daily bread, and I feel this is not exactly "truly noble". The truth is simply that very little has come out of Buddhism which can equal the way in which the West has harnessed Nature—our means of transport, our telegraph and telephone, our radio and TV and so on. We are still doing and improving on this while good Buddhists are still meditating. But any reader who is curious about Buddhism will find a wealth of appreciation in Dr. Parrinder's pages, which I cannot share.

I feel much the same about Confucianism. It is not a supernatural religion and its ethics are perhaps equal to those of other religions, but it has always seemed to me that it left the Chinese people for over 2,000 years exactly where they were in Confucius's day. It was only when Western navigators came into the country that the Chinese awoke from their torpor and began to realise that there was a world outside their enormous country which was infinitely superior to anything taught about it by Confucius or for that matter by Lao Tse, the other great Chinese teacher.

As for Islam, modern Muslim scholars strongly in-

fluenced by Western culture, are by no means disposed to admit that the Koran has said the last word on everything under the sun. But just like a modern Christian bishop, forced to believe in the Bible, or be accused of heresy, a Muslim is forced to call the book the "Living Word of God". Dr. Parrinder finds it, in spite of being dictated or actually written by God, "a very difficult book to read", though I cannot say I found it difficult in Sale's translation. My own feelings about it are that much of it is sheer rubbish, whatever it might have been for a sixth century fanatical believer. Mohammed is "the Apostle of God", and he wrote the Koran at the dictation of God. Mary, Jesus, Solomon, and other heroes of the Christian Bible are named, and there is no doubt that the writer or writers of the Koran had at least many of the Old and New Testament Apocryphal works at hand. It is doubtful if it was our canonical Bible which influenced the Koran.

Dr. Parrinder has a great deal to say about Islam, well worth saying—particularly where the Koran denies the story of the Crucifixion; and it is interesting to note that in one of the Islamic sects, the Shia, they have twelve Imams. This is not surprising when you consider that there are twelve signs of the Zodiac, twelve sons of Israel, and twelve apostles of Jesus. Anyway, the "twelvers" as they are called are still strong in Persia. Muslims also expect the coming of the Mahdi, just as some Jews expect the coming of the Messiah, and pious Christians expect the Second Coming of Jesus.

Judaism is "the mother of us all" claims Dr. Parrinder, for both Christianity and Islam "derive their view of God" from it. The scribes who wrote Genesis took "traditional myths mostly Babylonian" for it, which means that he does not believe in the wondrous story of the Fall of Man. Has he then given up Jesus as our "Saviour" for Jesus and the Genesis story of the Fall are indissolubly bound together?

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob "may or may not have been historical figures", but Judaism "became historical, founded, or at least, refounded, at Mount Sinai". There is not the slightest trace of evidence for this extraordinary statement. But while he admits "the stories of Moses and the judges contain legendary elements", there is in them "a substream of history", which as an opinion Dr. Parrinder has every right to hold, but as a statement of fact can be quite easily refuted.

Needless to say, Dr. Parrinder is delighted that modern Jews (like Dr. Klausner) often declare "Jesus as one of the greatest ethical teachers of Israel". Indeed he thinks that large numbers of Jews were converted to Christianity. He must have got hold of some very misleading figures. Be that as it may, he insists at the outset of his chapters on Christianity that "no secular historian today doubts that Jesus existed". It would be very interesting to have had this statement fortified by some explanations. Is the Jesus these secular historians believe existed, the Jesus of the Gospels—the Jesus who was the Son of God or God himself "in the flesh", who performed miracles, who was tempted by a real Devil, who could walk on water, stop a tempest, fly to heaven after being put to death, and is still living? Or is he a quite unknown itinerant preacher going about "doing good" (whatever that means) who left no trace in secular history?

Naturally, Dr. Parrinder has to go to Tacitus for proof

that Christians worshipped "Christ"; but he says nothing about the number of writers who have characterised the passage as a forgery. The "primary" sources for the life of Jesus are the books of the New Testament which Dr. Parrinder rightly calls "all documents of faith", and he himself shows his abundance of this quality by believing them.

It would be tiresome to deal with the usual Christian eulogies of Jesus he gives—we have read them all for centuries. Christians believe "that Jesus was the perfect revelation of God in man", Jesus "went far beyond other teachers", his teachings "are not just ethical flowers . . . they spring from a profound faith in God"; Jesus began by announcing "that the Kingdom of God was at hand"; "the actions and miracles of Jesus are an integral part of his work"; he was "the Messiah the Christ", and so on.

For Dr. Parrinder everything in the Gospels and Epistles is "divine". Paul is "a genius"—alas, "misunderstood by non-Christians". Jesus "chose his disciples" so that they could lay "the foundation of the Church" to succeed him.

Dr. Parrinder has a chapter on "what we can learn from other faiths", but Christianity still stands supreme. It tops them all, in spite of the fact that "the East has developed techniques of meditation" which are superior to the way Christians hurriedly say their prayers. We cannot help wondering if Dr. Parrinder sits alone on a tree trunk in a deserted forest "contemplating" his navel, and "meditating"? Surely it would have been far better for the contemplators in the East to have devised means to obviate the necessity for our "Freedom from Hunger" campaigns.

Dr. Parrinder's book is very interesting, clearly written, and well worth reading. What he says about Christianity we all knew years ago—and for the most part completely disbelieved.

## Points From a New Book

By OSWELL BLAKESTON

AN EIGHTEEN YEAR OLD student who managed a hitchhiking holiday to Timbuktu is clearly a young man with his wits about him. One is not surprised, then, that Nicholas Bennett, in his *Zigzag to Timbuktu* (John Murray, 18s), has pertinent things to say about the influence of Christian missionaries on society in Africa. He points out that Christian ethics were modified to fit the needs of Western society, and that, therefore, there is no reason why such ethics should be offered ready made to Africa which has no need for them. "In some ethnic groups", he writes, "the bride had a price which was paid to her father by the future husband. It paid the father to take good care of his daughter; if he didn't, the price was certain to go down. The Church declared that the bridal price was immoral. When fathers couldn't look to a high return for their trouble, they lost interest in their daughters and, consequently, some of them strayed to the towns and drifted into prostitution".

He would not wish to deny, he remarks, that many missionaries went to Africa in the sincere belief that they were doing good. But most of them were misfits, who had left Europe because they felt inferior, and they then tried to turn their little corner of Africa into a replica of the society in which they had failed but in which they did not intend to fail again. They were quite ruthless in their determination to put themselves over, and made no attempt to study the customs of the people before they tried to instruct them. How much cleverer they would have been, for instance, if they had proposed that the

rising of Christ should be commemorated at the beginning of the rainy season!

Mr. Bennett comments: "The missionaries were in their heyday in the nineteenth century. But while they were nobly engaged in quelling small tribal battles their fellow-Christians elsewhere were massacring practically the entire native population in Tasmania—to give only one example of other activities presided over by the Christian God. Today, the missionaries may be equally hampered by the fact that there are many Christians who seem prepared to use nuclear arms; and in South Africa there are others who believe that the Christian God created two different classes of men: the superior white, the inferior black".

Everywhere Mr. Bennett found the influence of missionaries to be disastrous in terms of happiness. Even benefits of medicine can be seen to be dubious when they destroy communal life. In Ghanaian villages, bathing is a social activity. If every family had a bathroom of its own, that would be one group activity the less. Would the individual be happier? And so on. Equally, the missionary's educational efforts often only lead to the educated leaving the land for the towns. "It is," writes Mr. Bennett, "disastrous to release people from agricultural labour if the end is materialism and rivalry". No, Africa needs neither the Western God nor the missionary's package deal of "material benefits". Africa needs to evolve in its own way, which Mr. Bennett outlines in his book, a way which might set a more rational pattern for a new type of society.

Finally, I think I can sum up the young author's own healthy approach in one little story about a wet night spent in a parked lorry when all the passengers were savaged by mosquitoes which buzzed madly under the tarpaulin:

"I cannot understand what the mosquitoes lived on before we stopped. They can't get on a moving lorry to eat the passengers, and we had parked miles away from any village, but they were waiting in the bush as if at a shop-bar. By four in the morning I was nearly dying of thirst as well as of suffocation, and mosquito bites. I tried to suck some water through the tarpaulin, but it was leaking only through the places I couldn't reach. I crawled over the bodies and out of the lorry. There was fresh air and cold rain. I had found Paradise without having to pray five times a day for it!"

## CORRESPONDENCE

*The Editor welcomes letters from readers, but asks that they be kept as brief and pertinent as possible.*

### THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

May I thank you for your article calling attention to the Church of England and the Toronto conference? It is of considerable value both in underlining the transition within Anglican thinking indicated by "South Bank" modernism and certain contemporary movements based upon Cambridge and by once again calling attention to the existence of the Church of England itself.

As I well know from past membership, the Church of England is an extremely amorphous body. Intellectually, it makes room for many different outlooks. Its modernist movements and its indigenous growth of a liberal Anglo-Catholicism enabled it to provide a home for Catholic modernism, a niche which the Roman Church had refused to George Tyrrell. In some ways, this inclusiveness was its strength making it more apparently liberal-minded than some Protestant bodies, even though it rested in practice upon the legalities of state establishment. Again, Anglicanism permitted a certain satisfaction to the aesthetic and to a sense of historical tradition entirely lacking in the bareness of Protestantism. Within an academic atmosphere, it is not too difficult to understand its theoretical pull if Christianity at large be accepted.

The change of mind comes when one surveys the practical accomplishment. It is parochial and insular to a degree and closely allied to the imperial expansion of England over the last four centuries. Making an inclusive appeal, it seeks to look after

every citizen. The result is that, in an age of decline, it more or less begs the local layman to come in on his own terms. As a result, the parish church again and again stands for nothing other than a sort of masonic ritual enshrining a conventional pattern of social conduct. At the present time, this pattern is breaking up, derived as it was from the conservative middle-class wings of last century social evolution. Professor Inglis has shown that the Church of England never had the working-classes whilst the Ward trial suggests how little it is taken seriously in certain social strata! Hence, the vital crisis for existence within Anglican life. Perhaps the most important speech at Toronto was that of the Bishop of Llandaff who called for disestablishment, pointed out the strong link between traditional Anglicanism and imperial expansion and suggested that the time had been reached when an Anglicanism of this type had served its purpose.

Yet, socially speaking, in education, the legal system and such-like fields, the power of the Church of England is still strong. It is a power emanating from constitutional rather than religious roots. The whole issue redirects the attention of the freethinker to the part played by a body which, in any practical and positive form, has a tiny minority membership. As an answer to the claims made at Toronto and to the clash of opinion which the whole conference showed, there should come a general demand from the freethought elements within society of disestablishment and disendowment in favour of the neutralisation of the state in matters of religion. Certainly, it is an illustration of the extent to which a religious humanism, having as its main aim a desire not to annoy the vicar, fails to meet the sociological position.

F. H. AMPHLETT MICKLEWRIGHT.

#### "ON THE TRIAL OF JESUS"

While thanking "Nicodemus" for pointing out that I had written "critical" instead of "uncritical" (I apologise to Mr. Winter) may I say that as far as I can see, it does not make the slightest difference to the issue. There may be "critical" readers of the Talmud, but I doubt if they know any more about it than the uncritical readers. In the original, with a language mixed up with dialects of Aramaic and Hebrew, the Talmud and its often unintelligible verbiage has been almost a closed book even to rabbis. So in answer to the question whether I have read the Talmud I unhesitatingly say no—thank heaven. But I have read enough of it to know that nowhere in its verbose pages is there any mention of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. H. CUTNER.

#### CARDINAL MINDSZENTY

Mr. McShane really ought to stick to the point under discussion, and avoid irrelevancies. My very small article on July 5th was entitled "Another Clerical Error", and dealt primarily with the amusing mistake which the *Universe* had made in saying that the capital of Hungary was Belgrade.

Secondly, there were three lines saying that Cardinal Mindszenty had dabbled in Hungarian politics, and there were eight lines about his flight to the security of the American legation in Budapest.

From this very slender material Mr. McShane has worked up an accusation that I had inferred that "the rising of the heroic workers of Hungary was led by dignitaries of the Catholic Church". This is preposterous of Mr. McShane; I never even mentioned the Hungarian rising.

Mr. McShane says that he fails to see any good in the present Hungarian government which "came to power over the dead bodies of the workers". Last September I was in Hungary for a few days; during my limited visit, I thought that the local conditions were quite reasonable. Certainly the Hungarians are better off today than they used to be under the selfish regimes of Hapsburgs and others. Great improvements have been made in land reform, the spread of education and the decline in the power of the Roman Catholic Church. These are benefits in which all liberally-minded people should rejoice

ADRIAN PIGOTT.

[This correspondence is now closed.—Ed.]

#### FREETHINKING

What is freethinking? More, I hope, than the negative virtues which Mr. Reginald Underwood claims for it. A freethinker should also be able and willing to acknowledge both good and evil where relevant. I think the points I raised are relevant to an article entitled "God's Woman", and that conspicuous partiality in regard to matters of fact is likely to weaken a freethinker's case by raising doubts as to his motives, his knowledge or his confidence.

What conduces to freethinking? A good education—by which I mean one which promotes truth and reason without sacrificing one for the sake of the other.

DAVID BIRD.

Freethought, as a body of principles, is a mere expedient; a temporary creed used, or should be used, in the selection of a

more permanent one like theism, atheism, agnosticism, rationalism, secularism, humanism, etc. The Freethinker is a truthseeker. Atheism is a naked truth sometimes clothed in rationalism or secularism. In his own mind the believer in God knows the "theistic truth": there is a God. On the other hand, the atheist knows the opposite truth—the real truth—that there is no God. The agnostic hangs on to the truism that he cannot know the "beginning" nor the "end" of eternity; that he is not in a position to deny nor to affirm God. He believes he has to know completely the unknown to reach a decision. He is not expected to abolish nor to propagate religion. Maybe there is, or maybe there is no God, he tells himself. He does not realise that we know enough to reject the primitive belief in an imaginary God. He is a fence sitter watching priests freeze the minds of men in fear, ignorance, and superstition!

The Freethinker or the truthseeker is sailing on a sea of thought. The moment he anchors to one of the above creeds, he ceases to be, or should cease to be, a freethinker; because then he cannot think freely from his creed. In his own mind he has found the truth of the God question and he has to live by and defend that truth! If someday, however, he wishes to evaluate again the other creeds, it simply means he wants to return once more to freethinking and truthseeking.

Reason and science guide thinking men to the right creed: Atheistic Humanism! GONZALO QUIOGUE Manila).

#### BIRMINGHAM BRANCH NSS DINNER

Market Hotel, Station Street  
(opposite New Street Station)

Saturday, September 28th. Reception, 6.30 p.m.

Chairman: W. MILLER

Tickets 15s. each from Mrs. M. MILLER, 62 Warwards Lane, Birmingham 29.

#### PENGUIN PLAYS

Plays of Shakespeare, separate, various prices.

Plays of Shaw, separate, 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. each.

Plays of Oscar Wilde, complete, 3s. 6d.

Three Tragedies, by F. G. Lorca, 3s. 6d.

Roots, by Arnold Wesker, 2s. 6d.

Plays of Jean-Paul Sartre (Altona, The Flies, Men Without

Shadows), 4s. 6d.

Plus postage from THE FREETHINKER Bookshop

**FREEDOM'S FOE: THE VATICAN.** By Adrian Pigott. Illustrated. Price 3/-; postage 6d.

**THE BIBLE HANDBOOK (11th Edition).** By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball. Price 5/-; postage 8d.

**AGE OF REASON.** Thomas Paine's masterpiece with 40-pages introduction by Chapman Cohen. Cloth 5/-; postage 7d.

**THE THINKER'S HANDBOOK.** By Hector Hawton. Price 5/-; postage 7d.

**PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE.** 18 of Chapman Cohen's celebrated pamphlets bound in one Volume. Indispensable for the Freethinker. Price 5/6; postage 8d.

**CATHOLIC ACTION.** By Adrian Pigott. Price 6d.; postage 3d.

**FAMILY PROBLEMS AND THE LAW.**

By Robert S. W. Pollard. Price 2/6; postage 6d.

**MATERIALISM RESTATED (Third edition).** By Chapman Cohen. Price 5/6; postage 7d.

**MEN WITHOUT GODS.** By Hector Hawton. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

**THE EVOLUTION OF THE IDEA OF GOD.** By Grant Allen. Price 3/6; postage 8d.

**THE LIFE OF JESUS.** By Ernest Renan. Price 2/6; postage 5d.

**THE ORIGINS OF RELIGION.** By Lord Raglan.

**A LETTER TO ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIESTS.**

By Emmett McLoughlin (An Ex-Franciscan Priest). 2/6 per doz. (incl. postage).

**POPE JOHN AND THE COLD WAR.** By F. A. Ridley. Price 5/-; postage 6d.

Price 2/6; postage 5d.